

July 25, 2007

The grave, life-threatening conditions faced by Iraq's minority religious communities have not been fully aired in Washington, much less the national media. Representatives from these communities have been requesting such an opportunity. Likewise, the Iraq Study Group encouraged the Commission to bring out more information on the status of these communities. This hearing aims to tell their stories. It is the first of its kind.

What is more, U.S. refugee policy on Iraq is currently under debate both in the Administration and in the Congress. One key issue in that debate is whether or not the non-Muslim minorities face particularized persecution in Iraq such that they should have greater access to the U.S. Refugee Program. The testimony at this hearing will help stress the importance of enhancing U.S. assistance to Iraqi refugees, a disproportionate number of which come from vulnerable minority religious communities.

9:00 Opening Remarks

Mr. Michael Cromartie

Chair, U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

9:15 Panel I: Religious Freedom in Contemporary Iraq

The Reverend Canon Andrew White

*President & CEO, Foundation for Reconciliation & Reconstruction in the Middle East and
Vicar of St. George's Anglican Church, Baghdad*

10:00 Panel II: The Persecution of Iraq's Communities of Antiquity

Ms. Pasqual Warda

Former Iraq Minister of Migration & Displacement and President, Assyrian Women's Union

Dr. Donny George

Former chairman of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and former director of the Iraqi National Museum

Mr. Michael Youash

Project Director, The Iraq Sustainable Democracy Project

Dr. Suhaib Nashi

General Secretary, The Mandaean Associations Union.

11:30 Close